

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

March 7, 2019

The Honorable Ralph DLG Torres
Governor
Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
Caller Box 10007
Saipan, MP 96950

Dear Governor Torres:

Thank you for taking the time to testify before the House Natural Resources Committee at our February 27 hearing, on recent immigration policy decisions by the Trump administration that are harmful to the Marianas and on my legislative proposals to reverse those decisions.

As you know from the hearing, I have obtained the administration's support for one of my proposals, H.R. 559. This bill provides permanent status in the Marianas for certain individuals, who had benefited from the humanitarian parole policies established by the Obama administration and who the Trump administration has now ordered to leave.

However, support for my legislation, H.R. 560, that provides permanent status to long-term workers and investors has not been forthcoming. So, I appreciate your agreement during the hearing to work to convince the Trump administration to support that bill, too. Please, keep me posted on your progress.

One decision that the Trump administration has under consideration, but which was not discussed at the hearing, is to end the parole system that allows tourists from China and Russia to enter the Marianas. Finding a way for these tourists to enter without a visa, as they had been able under Marianas immigration law, was a top goal in the early days of the transition to federal control. It took a concerted effort here in Congress, and by representatives of the Marianas business community and government, to convince the Obama administration to take this action, which then-Secretary Napolitano announced to me on October 21, 2009. The following ten years of increasing tourism in the Marianas are the direct result of this policy, which is now at risk.

You have previously denied that the Trump administration was considering taking away parole for tourists. And you downplayed my concern to the public, even though administration officials, including Assistant Secretary Doug Domenech, have told me directly that ending parole is under active consideration.

But news reports in the Marianas—and the Interior Department's read-out of the most recent Section 902 Consultations—make clear that you are now willing to recognize this threat is real and imminent. In fact, convincing the Trump administration not to take away parole was, I understand, the centerpiece of your 902 consultations.

The Honorable Ralph DLG Torres

March 7, 2019

Page 2

I congratulate you for acknowledging this reality; and I will support your efforts here in Congress in any way I can. But, just as you said to me in your letter of January 25 that my position as a Democrat in a Democratically-controlled House of Representatives gives me a new opportunity to work for permanent status, so, too, your special relationship with President Trump puts you in the most opportune position to keep the tourist parole policy in place.

Thank you for the work you are doing.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Kilili', with a horizontal line underneath.

GREGORIO KILILI CAMACHO SABLAN
Member of Congress